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EVIL OF POLITICS.

How It Shows Itself in the Conduct of City Waterworks.

Paper Read by John M. Diven, Secretary of the American Waterworks Association, at the Meeting of the Organization Held in June of the Present Year.

That politics does in many cases—probably a large majority of cases—enter into the management of waterworks owned and operated by cities and towns will not be denied. And that this is not right, is absolutely a menace to the health and welfare of the citizens in many cases, as well as a great financial loss, will not, I think, be denied. Too much depends upon the proper management of a public water supply to make it safe or right to allow politics to control or affect it.

To be a good waterworks superintendent or manager requires, in addition to ability and adaptability, long study and practice. If these managers are to be changed every time the city administration changes, it is evident that they can never have the experience that they should have to perform their duties properly. No matter how good men they may be they will still lack the proper training and experience.

This follows throughout the entire staff—office force, inspector, street foreman, meter readers and repairers, engineers and firemen—in fact, the entire force.

Again, will men who only expect to hold the "job" for two or three years give it the study and attention that it should have? It is not natural that they should; there is little incentive for them to do so; they know that the next election is likely to go the other way, so that they will have to go at some other work.

Then they have other duties to perform, other masters to serve—the men or party that put them in the position. Party allegiance must be observed at no matter what cost to the citizens. The men are employed for their politics, not for their worth or fitness for the particular position.

Under these circumstances, are the best men always or even usually chosen—the men fitted for the work?

The public water supply is a matter too all important to be made subservient to politics or any consideration except that of the very best possible supply of the purest water obtainable. All must use water. If it is pure and good, the health of the people will be good and the community will be prosperous. Because it is a healthy city with a low typhoid death rate home seekers will be attracted to it. But without proper supervision and management the purity of the water will in most cases always be in danger.

These political changes are often brought to the writer's attention in his capacity as secretary of this association, one of his duties being to try and keep track of the waterworks people of America. How frequently he finds these changes—for purely political reasons—going on! How many changes have to be made in our list of members for this reason! In looking back over the years of his connection with the association the number of such changes that come to mind is almost as long as the present list of members.

A man drops out, is not heard from. One of our associate members calls and in the course of conversation tells of a visit in "Grafton." Asked about Smith, the old superintendent, he says: "Why, hadn't you heard? At the last election there was a complete change in the political complexion of the city. Smith and all the old commissioners are out. Jones is the superintendent now." The commission is new, the superintendent is new, just because there has been a change in the political control. Smith was a good man for the position, had had long experience, thoroughly understood the work in every detail, was familiar with the works, knew all their weak points. In his long years of service he had gathered about him a corps of able and trained assistants. The works were well managed, the quality of the water above suspicion, the quantity ample. The management was economical; waste was kept at the lowest possible point. The plant was in first class condition.

But Smith didn't belong to the right political party. He was not an active politician, but he hadn't helped the party now "in," had, in fact, voted against them; hence he must go. No matter if the quality of the water is not kept up, if the quantity is lacking when a big fire occurs because waste had not been watched; no matter if typhoid fever breaks out because the water supply has not been properly guarded and sickness, suffering and death follow, the active politician, the men who helped the party, must be rewarded.

Jones is an "active politician." He can—in fact, did—carry the Seventeenth ward for the party in power. He is a good man, sober, industrious and intelligent. There is nothing against him; no fault can be found with his appointment so far as character goes. He was a clockmaker and a good one, but had absolutely no knowledge or experience with waterworks management.

Then O'Sullivan had a strong pull in the Seventh and controlled many votes, which he pulled for the dominant party. He had run an engine in Alderman Riley's wood yard—he knew the difference between the throttle and the exhaust; hence he was put in charge of the expensive machinery at the pumping station.

Stoppelbein was a clerk in Meyer's drug store; hence knew all about chemistry, water analysis, etc., and he

controlled a large German vote. He was put in charge of the filter plant, though he had no experience in managing either filters or men.

So down through the line the entire force is new and inexperienced, holding the positions because of the political work they had done, not because of their fitness or training.

To start with everything is in the best of condition in all departments, and things run on smoothly enough for a time. The pumping engines respond to the throttle, and the exhaust is clear. So they run smooth and pump water with no increased expense; no difference is perceptible. But in time the boilers through neglect become badly incrustated and require more coal to keep up steam. The packing of the engines becomes worn, the plungers worn, the pump valves broken. There is a loss of steam and vacuum, a big "pump slippage," and more coal is required.

Water is being freely wasted, and more has to be pumped and filtered. The filters are overworked, and with unskilled management soon fail to properly perform their work. Impure water is delivered to consumers, and a typhoid epidemic breaks out.

Then there is trouble, inquiry and investigation. Maybe the state board of health is called in. Anyhow, the trouble is remedied for the present; but the city and state being controlled by the same party, the matter is smoothed over.

Stoppelbein has had a lesson, has had experience and would probably give efficient management as long as the party "kept in," after which more inexperience would follow.

AGAINST CONFISCATION.

Sound Arguments Put Forward in the Famous Hughes Veto.

Referring to the two cent fare bill which he recently vetoed, Governor Hughes of New York gave utterance to his views on the subject of confiscatory legislation as follows:

"It is of the greatest importance not only that railroad corporations should be compelled to respect their public obligations, but also that they should be permitted to operate under conditions which will give a fair return for their service. Upon this depends not simply the security of investors, but the security of their employees and the protection of every form of industry and commerce through the maintenance and extension of necessary transportation facilities. Nothing could be more opposed to the interests of the community as a whole than to cripple transportation corporations by arbitrary reductions of earnings.

"I fully appreciate the fact that those who have promoted this bill believe that such a rate would be fair. But I deem it most important that the policy of dealing with matters of this sort arbitrarily, by legislative rule of general application without reference to the demands of justice in particular cases, should be condemned.

"Every workingman, every tradesman and every citizen believing himself to have aught at stake in the prosperity of the country should determinedly oppose it, for it not only threatens the stability of business enterprise which makes our prosperity possible, but it substitutes unreason for sound judgment, the ill considered demands of resentment for the spirit of fair play and makes impossible patient and honorable effort to correct abuses."

Great M. O. Graft Scheme.

The officials of a Kansas city have discovered a new way of working the graft scheme. Ignoring the fact that a private company had a franchise and contract for lighting the streets at a very low rate, they formed themselves into a company, voted themselves a franchise and made a contract with themselves for lighting the city. Under the terms of this contract the taxpayers furnish the building, labor, steam, oil, waste, etc., and the city agrees to take over the plant at any time within two years at the original cost plus 8 per cent per annum. The scheme has not been patented, and other city councils which find ordinary methods of grafting too slow are at liberty to make use of this process.

The White Man's Burden in Decatur.
The Journal of Decatur, Ind., recently printed a list of persons in that city who pay taxes of more than \$100 with the caption, "The White Man's Burden—Is Your Name on the List?—Municipal Ownership and \$4.74—How Do You Like It?" Appealed to for elucidation of this cryptic utterance, the editor writes:

"The tax in this city is \$4.74 on every \$100. The city of Decatur owns both her waterworks plant and electric light. There can be no question that municipal ownership is to a great extent responsible."

General English Revolt.

The London Morning Advertiser gives an account of the organization on June 5 of a federation of ratepayers and kindred associations to take steps "to prevent reckless enterprises of the municipal trades from being carried on as they are at the present time." Representatives from organizations all over the country were present. This movement is a pretty good indication of the revolt of the English people against municipal ownership.

A Strain on the Taxpayers.

Some time ago Georgetown, O., undertook to build an electric light plant. They voted bonds in accordance with the "estimates" and started construction, but soon found that in order to complete the plant \$12,500 in excess of the "estimates" would be needed. The additional bonds have been voted, but the extra expense is quite a strain on a town of 1,500 inhabitants.

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